

RAMESH BEDI—A PROFILE



—VIJAYA GUPTA

—Illustrated by SAHANA PAL

I had hardly any hope of meeting Ramesh Bedi as I was late by more than two hours. But to my surprise, I found him waiting. I tried to apologize by telling that I had wasted his time. "No. Never mind," he

said, "my time has not gone waste. I have been doing my work all these hours. Nowadays, I usually keep at home doing my work most of the time and very rarely go out. I think, it is the most advisable course

for a man of my age."

In his seventy-sixth year, Ramesh Bedi is still very much active, continuously working hard like a young man. In fact, he has been a hard worker throughout and his achievements bear a testimony to this sterling quality. He is well-known as an expert on wild life, a distinguished photographer, an authority on herbs and a litterateur par excellence. A prolific writer, he has authored 70 books on Junglelore which form a substantial part of his writing. About a score of them have been written especially for children, though many others are also as fascinating to children as they are to grown-ups.

As far as writings on wild life are concerned, Ramesh Bedi has carried on the tradition started by pioneers in the field like Shri Ram Sharma and Kunwar Suresh Singh. He has an inexhaustible treasure house of jungle stories and it would be appropriate to expect many more books from his facile pen in near future.

Though some of his stories have a blending of fiction, most of his books are based on his personal experiences. He has first-hand knowledge of flora and fauna in scores of countries in which he has travelled in connection with various missions. He has a rich collection of souvenirs brought from several countries and the children visiting his house in 'L' Block of the posh Rajouri Garden colony in New Delhi find it a veritable museum.

Born on 20th June, 1915 at Kalabag in North-West Frontier Province of undivided India (now in Pakistan), Ramesh Bedi was sent to Gurukul Kangdi Vishvavidyalaya, Haridwar, at the tender age of eight years. He lived there for fifteen years and studied Ayurved. He obtained the degree of Ayurvedalankar in 1938, and thereafter, went to Lahore where he practised medicine, ran a pharmacy and also engaged himself in writing and publishing books. However, the partition of the country

brought him back to Gurukul Kangdi. He remained in the service of Gurukul Kangdi for thirteen years till 1960, when he got a government job as Research Officer in the Health Ministry, Government of India. He retired from Government service as Senior Research Officer in the year 1973.

An authority on herbs, Ramesh Bedi has served as member or convener of numerous expert committees on herbiculture, including the one appointed for recommending the establishment of saffron farms and breeding of musk deer. He collected about eight thousand specimens of herbs and made their photographic records. He also prepared Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Portuguese and Latin vocabularies of the nomenclature of botanical species found in Brazil. His specimen of Herbarium are displayed in many countries. He has been a visiting Professor in Brazil for a while and an examiner of various institutions engaged in study, research and training in herbs. He was an advisor for documentary films produced in London on the subjects of Indian Culture, wild life and Ayurved.

Ramesh Bedi wandered a lot in the forest in search of herbs. This provided him opportunities to look at the dwellers of the jungles at close quarters. He studied them carefully and made their photographic records using his excellent skill in photography. He already had an inherent instinct for writing and he had started making use of it during the days of his early career at Lahore. The instinct became stronger as he grew in age and experience. The result was a good deal of informative writings on herbs as well as wild life. One of the most prolific writers of India on botanical subjects and wild life, Ramesh Bedi makes the narration lively. His descriptions are interspersed with photographs he has been taking as an enthusiastic lensman. These photographs enhance the quality of nar-

ration and make it lively and revealing. His contributions have appeared in many languages of the world.

Writings of Ramesh Bedi are popular among readers of all age-groups. With regard to his writings for children, Bedi states that he engaged himself in this exercise with a purpose. He believes that the children of the day are the makers of the future. So their attitudes and aptitudes need to be shaped in a manner that may be conducive to bringing about a better tomorrow. This may be done by acquainting the young generation with the importance of protection to environment, conservation of wild life and maintenance of ecological balance. Bedi records the life and habits of animals in minute details which help the young readers to conceive the wild animals as friends and benefactors of mankind.

Bedi says that he had a strong urge to write about wild life particularly for children as there are not sufficient number of books for them on this subject. He carefully chooses his themes keeping in view the psyche and interest of children. He tries his best to keep the language within the grasp of children and remains conscious about avoiding such incidents or narrations which may adversely affect their tender minds or cause a loss of interest in reading. He has a practical way of assessing children's psyche. While going for an exploration or photography session in a jungle, he usually takes his young grandchildren with him. He carefully observes

reactions of these youngsters to every joy and delight of junglelore.

Bedi has an enormous collection of 60 to 70 thousand photographs of wild life. So he faces no problem in picking up suitable photographs covering different aspects of junglelore.

Bedi aspires to write more and more for children. However, he is very much occupied these days with the preparation of an encyclopaedia of herbs and medicinal plants. Yet he steals some time from his busy schedule for writing to cater to his young readers.

Bedi says that his children and grandchildren had greatly enjoyed these excursions into the jungles for observing the wild life. His family members never objected when he took young children to jungles full of wild beasts, rather they encouraged them.

Bedi has so many pets and living animals in his home that it has become a mini zoo in itself. They include animals, birds and reptiles from different countries. It is really a task to keep such animals for each of them is to be provided with a homely environment and its favourite foods etc. Souvenirs and mementoes from different lands make his home a mini-museum in itself. Bedi has a satisfaction that all his family members right from his wife down to grandchildren fully co-operated in his activities. He feels that he has still to do a lot more to contribute to literature for children.

Books by Bedi.

Title	Year	Price in Rupee	Publisher.
Ajagar (Python, in Hindi)	—	—	Atmaram & Sons Kash- miri Gate, Delhi-6.
Genda (Indian Rhinoceros, in Hindi)	—	3.00	Publications Division, Patiala House, New Delhi-1.

<i>Jangal Ki Baten</i> (True stories of the wild animals, in Hindi) 1980	5.00	Alekh Prakashan V-8, Nabin Shahdara, Delhi-32.
<i>Kabutar</i> (Pigeon, in Hindi) —	5.00	Publications Division, Patiala House, New Delhi-1.
<i>Sher</i> (The Tiger, in Hindi) 1977	3.00	Rajpal & Sons, Kash- miri Gate, Delhi-6.
<i>Simha</i> (The Asiatic Lion, in Hindi) 1973	3.25	Publications Division, Patiala House, New Delhi-1.
<i>Tendua Aur Cheetal</i> (Leopard & Hunting Leopard, in Hindi) —	8.00	—do—
<i>Sher Ka Natakhat Bachcha</i> (A Playful Tiger Cub, in Hindi) 1988	20.00	Kitab Ghar, Gandhi Nagar Delhi-31.
<i>Playful Tiger Cub</i> English 1988	20.00	Kitab Ghar, Gandhi Nagar Delhi-31.
<i>Ahesan Farosh Sherni</i> (Tigress, in Hindi) 1990	10.00	—do—
<i>Amar ho Gaya Magar</i> (Crocodile in Hindi) 1990	10.00	—do—
<i>Jangali Hathiyon ki Shok Sabha</i> (Elephants, in Hindi) 1990	10.00	—do—
<i>Tenduen ne Insan ke</i> <i>Bachche ko Pal Liya</i> (Leapard, in Hindi) 1990	10.00	—do—
<i>Sinhon ki Davat</i> (Lion, in Hindi) 1990	10.00	—do—
<i>Azadi ke liya chhata-patata Genda,</i> (in Hindi) 1990	10.00	—do—
	10.00	—do—